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SENSITIVE

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SUBJECT: GAZA UPDATE JANUARY 10, 2009, 1300 LOCAL

REF: JERUSALEM 91

¶1. (SBU) Summary. President Abbas, in a press conference with President Mubarak January 10, called on HAMAS and Israel to accept the UNSC resolution immediately and said the Egyptian proposal is the means to implement the resolution. He said Palestinian reconciliation is necessary, but that peace -- not resistance -- should be the goal. He also said the PA wants an international presence in Gaza. Israeli military operations continued January 9-10 in northern Gaza, Khan Yunis and Rafah, with the heaviest fighting taking place on the outskirts of Gaza City. The IDF moved closer to urban centers in Gaza City and Khan Yunis, and maintained positions throughout the Gaza Strip. Airstrikes in Gaza City and Rafah damaged homes, tunnels, workshops, and, in one incident, a building housing several media offices. Gaza-based medical sources reported as many as 801 dead and 3325 wounded since hostilities began. A humanitarian pause is underway from 1300-1600, but fighting continues. UNRWA and ICRC say they will resume movement inside Gaza "as soon as possible," like on Sunday. End summary.

Political Developments

¶2. (SBU) In a press conference in Cairo January 10, President Abbas called on HAMAS and Israel to accept the UNSC resolution immediately and said the Egyptian proposal is the mechanism to implement it. He said the PA wants international forces in Gaza. He denied that a meeting with Israeli PM Olmert is in the works. Abu Mazen said HAMAS is part of the Palestinian people, adding that peace -- not resistance -- should be the Palestinians' goal, and that Palestinian reconciliation will be necessary after the crisis.

¶3. (SBU) A HAMAS delegation arrived in Cairo January 9 to discuss the Egyptian proposal with senior Egyptian officials. HAMAS Political Bureau member Muhammad Nazal told the press that all crossings into Gaza must be opened.

Ground Operation Continues,
Focus in Northern Gaza

¶4. (SBU) Gaza-based sources, local press, and the UN report that the IDF continued operations January 9-10 in roughly the same areas in which it operated throughout the week, killing at least 15 militants and as many as ten others overnight and wounding roughly 37 Palestinians.

-- NORTHERN GAZA: The UN and Gaza-based sources reported that the IDF clashed with militants and shelled houses around Bayt Lahiya, Bayt Hanun, and Jabaliya, killing at least one woman in Bayt Lahiya. Three soldiers from the Givati brigade were wounded during operations in northern Gaza. IDF forces in the area uncovered a laboratory and tunnel where weapons were manufactured and stored, according to Israeli radio.

-- GAZA CITY: Gaza-based media reported heavy fighting into the

morning of January 10 on the outskirts of Gaza City. A journalist and his mother were killed by tank fire and at least five homes were destroyed in the al-Zaytun neighborhood south of Gaza City. Gaza-based sources also reported clashes in Shujaiya and al-Tufah neighborhoods. The IDF advanced several hundred meters into the Sudaniya neighborhood in northern Gaza City.

-- CENTRAL GAZA: The UN reported that IDF troops engaged militants near the former settlement of Netzarim when the troops crossed Zahra City, northwest of the Nusayrat refugee camp.

-- KHAN YUNIS: IDF troops advanced several hundred meters toward Khan Yunis and engaged militants there and in Abasan, according Gaza-based contacts.

¶5. (SBU) The UN reported that the IDF maintained the positions in the following areas, but no fighting was reported.

-- CENTRAL GAZA: IDF troops maintained their position east of Johr al-Dik, northeast of al-Burayj. IDF troops maintained their position east of Abu al-Ajeen, east of Dayr al-Balah.

-- SOUTHERN GAZA: IDF troops maintained their position east of the defunct Rafah airport.

Airstrikes and Naval Barrage Continue

¶6. (SBU) Gaza-based sources, local press, and the UN reported that the IAF and Israeli Navy struck at least 40 targets January 9-10, including rocket launching areas, metal workshops, tunnels, and homes. Most of the targets were in and around Gaza City and in

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Rafah near the Egyptian border, with others reported in northern and central Gaza.

-- NORTHERN GAZA: Gaza-based press reported an estimated seven family members dead from an IAF attack on their home in Jabaliya.

-- GAZA CITY: The IAF January 9 struck the roof of a building in Gaza City that housed 20 media offices, injuring one journalist, according to press. Gaza-based press reported that the IAF January 10 struck the Civil Defense Headquarters in Gaza City, destroying the building. Gaza-based sources reported that the IAF destroyed several workshops along unspecified portions of Salah al-Din Street in Gaza City.

-- CENTRAL GAZA: At least one Palestinian was killed and seven wounded when the IAF struck a home in al-Nusayrat refugee camp, according to Gaza-based press.

-- SOUTHERN GAZA: The IAF January 10 struck a disused HAMAS security compound in Khan Yunis. An estimated three HAMAS militants were killed and six houses destroyed in IAF strikes in Rafah.

Rocket Fire Causes Two Injuries

¶7. (SBU) Press reported at least ten rockets fired into Israel from Gaza on January 10 as of 1300 local, injuring five and sending 19 Israelis into shock. Press reported at least 30 rockets and mortars were fired from Gaza on January 9, lightly injuring one man and sending several Israelis into shock. The IDF denied a HAMAS claim to have struck an IAF base 27 kilometers from Tel Aviv.

Casualties

¶8. (SBU) Gaza-based medical sources told the press that at least 801 Palestinians have been killed since hostilities began through January 10 (including 257 children, 93 women, 57 "elderly," 12 paramedics, and three journalists), and that 3,325 people have been injured requiring medical treatment.

¶9. (SBU) Israeli media reported several soldiers were wounded from

January 9-10.

Humanitarian Situation

¶10. (SBU) UNRWA said it was informed by noon of a humanitarian pause that would take place from 1300-1600 local on January 10. The UN announced that it would resume activity in Gaza "as soon as possible" after receiving credible assurances January 9 that the IDF would respect the security of UN personnel and equipment. ICRC stated that it will continue key activities in Gaza -- such as the work of its surgical team at al-Shifa Hospital -- but that it will not conduct relief convoys. The UN reported that over 24,000 Gazans are currently displaced.

WALLES